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5/27/04

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LOCAL&STATE Rockford Register Star, Thursday, May 2

Landfill given OK to expand

The move gives the rural Winnebago County dump another three to four years of use.

By **BRIAN PETERS**
Rockford Register Star

ROCKFORD — Winnebago Reclamation Services can expand its Pagel landfill in rural Winnebago County even though nearby groundwater is contaminated and being monitored by the federal government.

The state approved the expansion, which will add 1.5 million cubic yards to the dump. The expansion will fill in 2.9 vacant acres between the operating landfill and the old Pagel Pit site, which is on the federal government's Superfund list.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said the expansion should not threaten the cleanup at Pagel Pit.

Winnebago Reclamation Services, a subsidiary of William Charles Ltd., owns the 100-acre landfill. It is bounded by Kilbuck Creek to the west and Lindenwood Road to the east.

Life of a landfill

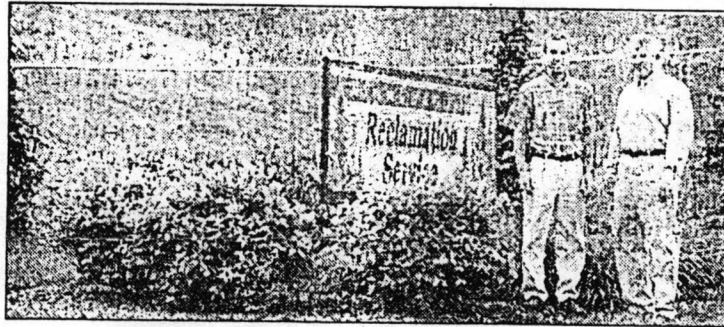
The landfill now has three to four years until it reaches capacity. The expansion is expected to add three to four years to the landfill's life.

The city has a contract with Winnebago Reclamation Services and Rock River Disposal Services to dispose of the city's garbage through 2013.

"This expansion pretty much assures that we'll have that capacity available to fulfill that contract," said Tom Hilbert, the engineering manager with the Waste Group division of William Charles Ltd.

For the few residents in the area, the expansion of the landfill is not welcome news.

Jean Winquist has lived in that rural area since 1947, long before the landfill opened.



Amy J. Van Horn/Rockford Register Star

Tom Hilbert (left), engineering manager, and John Lichty, general manager, stand Friday at the site of the Winnebago Reclamation Services' landfill.

"I'm disappointed that they ever got started out here because we used to farm and it was nice," Winquist said. "Now it's all changed. You get a lot of truck traffic and everything. I don't have my choice, but if I did, I would like to see them go somewhere else."

The Onyx Orchard Hill Landfill in Ogle County also is not far from the Winnebago Reclamation landfill.

Garbage and money

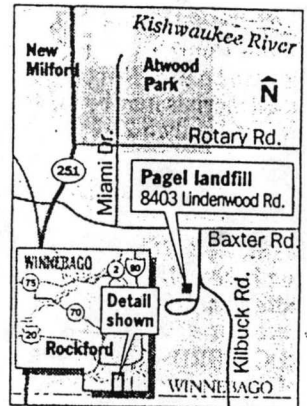
Last year, the City Council extended its garbage contract with Winnebago Reclamation through 2013. The city dumps around 55,000 tons a year at the landfill at a cost of \$30 a ton.

The expansion was crucial to fulfilling that contract and is good news because it will keep jobs in the community, said Sue Grans, a spokeswoman with William Charles Ltd. The landfill has between 12 and 15 full-time staff members and an annual payroll of \$1.1 million. The expansion will cost about \$5 million.

"What does this mean to us?" Grans said. "It means the (landfill) plan works."

The landfill is next to the old Pagel Pit landfill, which is on the federal government's Superfund list of the most polluted sites in the country.

The Pagel Pit landfill opened in 1972. It was listed as a Superfund site in 1984 because of contaminants that had leaked from the landfill into area groundwater.



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In 2002, the federal government completed its first five-year review of the cleanup process at Pagel Pit.

Unlike the Acme Solvent Reclaiming Inc. site across the road, the EPA is allowing nature to take its course in cleaning Pagel Pit. The feds required that a water-treatment plant be placed at the Acme Solvent Reclaiming Inc. site.

With Kilbuck Creek nearby, using a water treatment system would only take clean water out of the creek, said Bernard Schorle, a remedial project manager for the U.S. EPA.

"When I first heard about the possibility of eventually filling in between the two landfills, I wasn't real happy about it," Schorle said. "This was probably several years ago. But the more you think about it, there doesn't seem to be any reason not to do it."

Schorle said he has confidence that Winnebago Reclamation will do a good job maintaining the facility there.

"I haven't had any problems with this group of people," Schorle said. "Compared to some other that I've seen, they do a very good job of operating a landfill. And it's to their advantage to do that. It lessens their problems with the state."

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